

Finch delays new 'digs'

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EDITORIAL

ROBERT H. FINCH, who is trying to run that enormous government conglomerate known as the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), has postponed a three-year-old project to erect a new executive office building for his department.

He acted because he said the cost estimates for the new structure were excessive, even at today's inflated price levels.

In 1966, when the structure was proposed, the cost was guessed at \$26 million. Now, the planners figure it would cost \$40 million, a lot of which Mr. Finch said could be blamed on the "unusual design," including an "extensive" use of granite.

It seems that when the government puts up a new building — as it always is doing — the first thing the designers think of is stone, lots of it. The building first of all has to be ornate.

The HEW department has jumped from 36,000 employees to more than 111,000 in 15 years — and Mr. Finch says the new building is "urgently"

needed, but not at the "intolerable" cost now estimated.

We have a suspicion HEW somehow will survive if it doesn't get the new building. Anyway, the Nixon Administration is now in the process of trying to reduce the federal payroll. Let's first see how that comes out.

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